

# Treatment Options for Partial Rotator Cuff Tears

Patient Handout



## Background

A rotator cuff tear is an injury to the tendons and small muscles deep within the shoulder that act to stabilize the shoulder joint. Partial rotator cuff tears are injuries that do not go all the way through both sides of the tendon. Partial articular sided tears occur on the joint side of the rotator cuff while bursal sided tears occur on the upper surface of the rotator cuff.

They may be due to a single injury, overuse, or more degenerative changes seen with getting older. Symptoms can include shoulder pain, weakness, limited ability to move your arm, trouble with overhead activities, or trouble sleeping at night.

Articular Side Tear

Bursal Side Tear

Full Thickness Tear



## TREATMENT OPTIONS

- ❖ Rest and activity Modification
- ❖ Oral Medications
- ❖ Physical Therapy
- ❖ Corticosteroid Injection
- ❖ PRP Injection
- ❖ Rotator Cuff Repair
- ❖ Rotator Cuff Repair with Patch Augmentation

## References:

1. Lukasiewicz P, McFarland EG, Weber SC. Partial rotator cuff tears: algorithmic approach to treatment. *Ann Jt.* 2023 Jun 12;8:21. Doi:10.21037/aoj-22-38.
2. Plancher KD, Shanmugam J, Briggs K, Petterson SC. Diagnosis and management of partial thickness rotator cuff tears: A comprehensive review. *J AM Acad Orthop Surg.* 2021 Dec 14;29(24):1031-1043. Doi:10.5435/JAAOS-D-20-01092.
3. Cobb TE, Dimock RAC, Memon SD, Consigliere P, Ajami S, Imam M, Narvani AA. Rotator cuff repair with patch augmentation: What do we know? *Arch Bone Jt Surg.* 2022 Oct;10(10):833-846. Doi:10.22038/ABJS.2022.61345.3012.
4. Picture taken from <https://ilchiro.org/is-it-a-full-thickness-or-a-partial-thickness-tear-of-the-rotator-cuff/>

# Treatment Options

	What it Means	How it Works	Pros	Cons
Rest and Activity Modification	Decrease strenuous shoulder activities, and avoid the painful movements	Reduces strain on the muscles	Least Invasive treatment option  Allows your body to work on healing itself	Can take many weeks or months for improvement  Can affect your ability to do activities you enjoy
Oral Medications	Taking oral anti-inflammatory medications daily like Ibuprofen, Celebrex, Meloxicam, or Naprosyn  Can also try topical medications like Voltaren gel	Oral anti-inflammatory medications reduce pain and inflammation throughout your entire body  Topical medications decrease pain and inflammation at the surface	Less Invasive  Can be combined with other treatment modalities	May take trying different medications to find one that works for you  There can be stomach upset with frequent use of some of these oral medications
Physical Therapy	Performing exerciss with a physical therapist who teaches you how to strengthen your shoulder safely	Strengthens the rotator cuff and large muscles of the shoulder	Less invasive  Improves shoulder strength  Goal is to give you an exercise program you can do on your own  Can be combined with other treatment modalities	Can be challenging to schedule PT sessions depending on availabilitiy  Can take weeks to months to see symptom improvement
Corticosteroid Injections	Clinic injection into the shoulder/subacromial space (above the rotator cuff), with a steroid medication	Reduces inflammation around the rotator cuff	Can see symptom relief quickly  Confirm symptoms are from rotator cuff and not arthritis  Can be combined with other treatment modalities  May make it more comfortable for PT	Mildly invasive  The amount of symptom relief varies amongst patients  The length of time for symptom relief varies amongst patients  May cause degeneration of the tendon if done repeatedly and could lead to a complete tear
PRP Injection	Clinic injection into the shoulder/subacromial space (above the rotator cuff), with platelet rich plasma (PRP) taken from your own blood	PRP draws in your body's own growth factors and creates a healing environment within the shoulder	Uses your own blood products to help your body heal itself  Can be done multiple times without increasing degeneration of the tendon	Requires a blood draw and an injection during your visit  Not covered by most insurances and can cost over \$1000 out of pocket  Can make the shoulder more painful initially  The amount of symptom relief varies amongst patients  The length of time for symptom relief varies amongst patients
Rotator Cuff Repair	Arthroscopic surgery to repair the partially torn rotator cuff through small portal incisions around the shoulder	Small anchors are placed into the bone and stitches from the anchor are used to repair the tendon back together	Restores the tissue back to its anatomic location  Any other issues within the shoulder (biceps, AC joint, labrum, cartilage) can be addressed at the time of surgery	More invasive and increased pain relative to nonop treatment that will improve after surgery  Have to wear a sling for immobilization for up to 6 weeks after surgery  Will need to schedule multiple PT session postop for rehabilitation and best results
Rotator Cuff Repair with Patch Augmentation	Arthroscopic surgery to repair the rotator cuff by placing a patch over the area of damaged tendon through small portal incisions around the shoulder	The bioinductive patch provides material for the rotator cuff to heal to and covers the area of damaged tendon	Provides more bulk and support to the damaged rotator cuff  Any other issues within the shoulder (biceps, AC joint, labrum, cartilage) can be addressed at the time of surgery  May be able to start active motion sooner than traditional repair	More invasive and increased pain relative to nonop treatment that will improve after surgery  Have to wear a sling for immobilization for up to 6 weeks after surgery  Will need to schedule multiple PT session postop for rehabilitation and best results